



# ● DOWNTOWN NASHUA

Downtown Development History

Presentation 1 of 4

October 5, 2011

# OVERVIEW

- Historical Perspective: Where Have We Come From?
- Downtown Circulation Improvements for Consideration
  - Pedestrian Malls
  - Road Diets
  - One-way Streets Conversion

# WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?



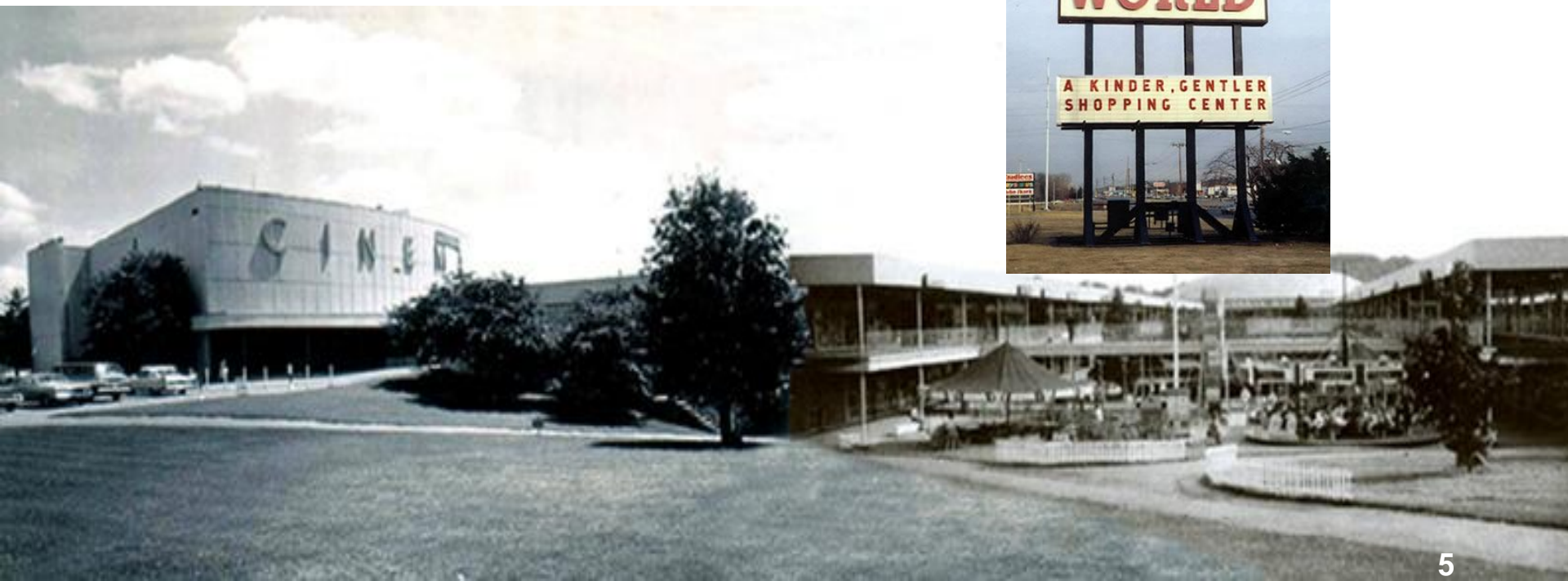
# 1940s NASHUA





# 1951-FRAMINGHAM, MA

## FIRST MALL EAST OF MISSISSIPPI



# 1956-INTERSTATE HIGHWAY ACT SIGNED



# 1957: EVERETT TURNPIKE CONNECTS NASHUA TO MANCHESTER





# 1963 – SIMONEAU PLAZA



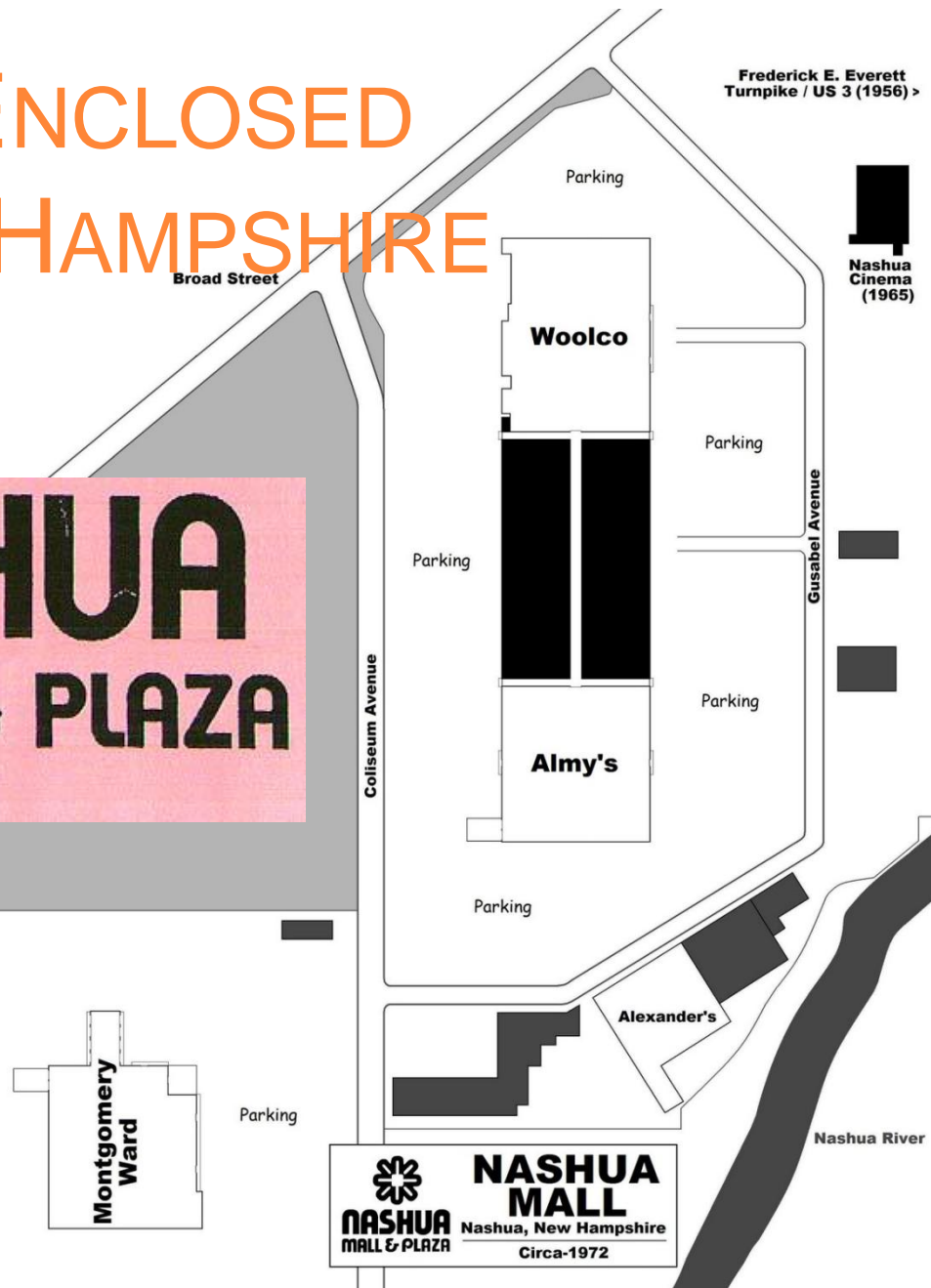


# 1966-EVERETT TURNPIKE EXTENDED





# 1970: FIRST ENCLOSED MALL IN NEW HAMPSHIRE





- Urban Renewal
- Diagonal parking on Main Street removed
- Street converted to one-way



# 1980s & 1990s REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES

- 1980: Downtown Streetscape reconstruction, Clocktower Place renovation
- 1990s: Retail and restaurant revival
- 2000s: Nashua Riverwalk



# **Downtown Nashua**

## **Downtown Development History (Presentation 1 of 4) Companion Transcript**

This presentation intends to provide a brief history lesson about Downtown Nashua and the factors that drove its growth, decline and then rejuvenation over the past 70 years.

Downtown Nashua's story is the same as the one that could be told by almost every 100 year-old Downtown in America.

### **Pre-War**

Downtown Nashua thrived prior to WWII, as it was the center of activity for the region.

- Everyone shopped in Downtown Nashua,
- Everyone did business in Downtown Nashua,
- Everyone had to be in Downtown Nashua (or be seen in Downtown Nashua).

This, of course, was prior to the growth of the automobile and the development of modern highways.

### **Post-War**

After WWII, America saw a tremendous growth in development of suburbs, highway construction and use of the automobile.

Shoppers World opened up in Framingham, MA in 1951, providing a clear sign of things to come. With its convenient parking, easy access and spacious and diverse store selection, this mall became a big hit.



Just five years later, in 1956, the Interstate Highway Act was signed into law, ushering in the era of highway construction.

The next year, the Everett Turnpike extended from Nashua to Manchester, linking these two cities with an easy, quick and traffic free solution to intercity travel. This allowed many to avoid the relative congestion found in Downtown Nashua.

Suburban shopping plazas, with the ample parking lots and big signs designed to capture the attention of drivers, began to proliferate in the 1960s. Simoneau Plaza was constructed in 1963 just south of Downtown Nashua. It was soon followed by additional new shopping plazas in the south end and along Amherst Street.

By 1966, the Everett Turnpike was connected to US Route 3, connecting Nashua to Lowell, Burlington and beyond.

This quickly led to a substantial growth in residential in Nashua, greatly increasing the population of Nashua—and spreading out the population away from the historic center of the City.

In 1970, the first enclosed shopping mall in New Hampshire was built on Broad Street and was known as the Nashua Mall and Plaza.

Downtown merchants and city leaders grew increasingly concerned about the competition on the outskirts of Nashua. They advocated strategies that would make Downtown Nashua more like these new shopping centers. Projects included:

- Eliminating diagonal parking along Main Street (to increase traffic flow) in 1969

- Creating one way streets as a way of improving traffic flow and access to Downtown Nashua
- Massive redevelopment of entire neighborhood using federal urban renewal funding. Myrtle Street and the Bronstein Apartments are a clear example of this—the site was originally planned to host commercial sites.

All of these efforts, one could argue, did not stem the migration of consumers to the suburbs—it may have hastened the exodus.

In the 1980s and 1990s, interest in revitalizing downtowns picked up across the country. The historic preservation movement increased as people began to long for an alternative to a landscape filled with parking lots, highways and detached malls. Many were seeking the authenticity of our downtown areas.

Investments in a pedestrian friendly streetscape in the late 1970s and the redevelopment of Clocktower Place brought people back to Downtown Nashua. Further investments in the Nashua River Walk also helped to encourage the growing restaurant and retail renaissance.